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GARDEN NOTES

Number Eight



Including a Visit to the
GARDEN OF M. MILLET.

*Third of a series of descriptive notes on
Visits to Foreign Gardens.*

Issued by
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SOMETIMES wonder if these Garden Notes are of any practical service to the persons to whom I am sending them. I am a Rotarian, which you know is an organization built up around the idea that the only successful life is the one which performs service for others. The editor of the newspaper must perform a service to his readers; the merchant must perform a service both to his customers and his employees; the clerk must perform a service not only to his employer, but also to every person who visits his counter; the lawyer and laborer alike should not only do work for the money which they receive, but the work itself should be a service. The "Service" standard of success seems to be a practical one, and the mother in the home gives us the most

perfect example of the ideal service, the service which gives and does not expect to receive. It is in the hope that these Garden Notes may be of service that they are being mailed to you.

This is Peony planting time and there is one caution which I would like to give to every Peony convert. *DON'T PLANT YOUR PEONIES TOO DEEP!* More harm is done in the Peony world by too deep planting than by any other cause. I have found by years of work with my own roots, years in which I used my own hands in direct contact with the earth, that under no circumstances should the eyes or sprouts be covered with more than two inches of soil. I very often cover the eyes with only one inch of soil, but then I watch them very carefully to see that this light covering is not washed away by the heavy fall and spring rains. Hard freezing seems to help Peony roots, and after the first hard freeze, I like to keep them frozen until March, if possible, and so as soon as the ground is frozen solid, I place over my newly planted bed of the very rarest varieties, a covering of two or three inches of straw, leaves or litter, just to keep the ground from thawing out. The heaving caused by the alternate freezing and thawing of February and early March sometimes lifts the roots out of the ground, and my two or three inch covering prevents the sun's rays from even reaching the soil. I do not try to cover Peonies which are a year or more old, for they have had time to anchor themselves, and as the roots are elastic, they adjust themselves to the weather conditions. In this latitude, 41° north, I have found that the covering should be carefully removed about April 1st.

My experience has proven to me that Strong One-Eye Divisions are the economical roots to plant, and I hope that every Peony enthusiast will this season lift one of his own Peonies which is at least two years old and cut from it a piece of root which has one good eye, and trim this piece of root to a length of not over six inches, and then in new, fresh ground, plant this One-Eye Division, and the entire balance of the root, which I hope may have five or more eyes, side by side, and give each of them the same cultivation, and in four years I believe you will find that the One-Eye plant is not only larger, but also stronger and more prolific. When we say "a Strong Division," we mean not size, but strength, and a One-Eye Division taken from a two or three year old healthy Peony plant can manifest more strength than you ever dream of.

Do not keep your Peony roots soaked after the blooming season. It ruins them, and seems to have the same effect on them that the always moist soil of Holland has. I have learned by bitter experience that many of the roots sent out from Holland refuse for years to bloom, and I feel sure it is because the soil is always moist, and the roots do not ripen and prepare the buds for next year's bloom. Instead of ripening in July and August, and preparing the buds for the following season, as our American Peonies do, the Holland plants just keep on growing roots, and so when this Holland stock is shipped to us in America, the plants just keep on with their old Holland habit of growing roots and neglecting bloom. I am sorry that I did not get into Holland to see with my own eyes that the Holland roots are not good bloomers in their native country, but one of the Holland growers who visited Van Wert in 1917 said that he had cultivated some well known varieties for years and had never seen a bloom. And so I believe Holland is a good place to grow Peony roots, but not Peony bloom.

Never plant a Peony division in the same spot from which the old root was taken. It will not grow into a healthy plant. It may live but it will be a disappointment.

If you are a new Peony enthusiast, be sure you do not plant your roots upside down. The pink, or pink and white, sprouts are the beginning of next year's bloom stalks, and so the eyes must be UP. I have heard of a few beginners who made this mistake and so, of course, their plants have not done very well.

Some flower lovers have had large Peony plants given them by Peony loving friends, and after moving the four or ten year old root to a new location, have found that they get no bloom and the plant grows weaker instead of stronger. I do not believe that any Peony over a year old should ever be moved without dividing it, and I am sure that no Peony four or more years old will do itself justice, if moved without being divided. We can afford to be generous with our divisions of old Peonies, for we can usually get a dozen or more divisions from an old root, and if they are distributed in the neighborhood it not only makes for friendship, but it also develops a community love of the beautiful.

If we keep one or two for our own door-yard, they will soon outstrip the original plants.

In order to carry out my promise to tell of my visits to foreign gardens I am including in this issue an account of my visit to the garden of M. Millet.

Visit to the Gardens of

M. MILLET

The second Iris Garden I visited was that of M. Millet, a French soldier and hero of the late war. Like other real soldiers he did not care to talk of his exploits but his wounds were so serious that for eighteen months, I believe, he was unable to walk, but thanks to modern skill he is now able to take complete charge of his garden.

I told you particularly of one Iris in M. Denis' garden. Now there is one equally famous in M. Millet's garden, which he has named in honor of his sister MADAME GAUDICHAU, and every Iris grower with whom I talked in both France and England conceded that this variety must be placed in every list of the world's best Irises. The feeling was unanimous, and I really believe that M. Millet does not realize how great is the regard for this particular Iris. It has every good point for which we seek in an Iris—color, quality, height, form and size. It is true that AMBASSADEUR is taller but GAUDICHAU is a more prolific bloomer. DOMINION has more quality in its petals but GAUDICHAU has better form as a growing plant. In a contest as to quality, I do not know why any Iris now in commerce should have a higher rating. Its color is a splendid shade of blue-purple, and when allowed to open in partial shade, it approaches perfection. M. Millet told me that he has another seedling which he believes has equal merit, to which he expects to give the name of the maiden who later became Madame Millet, but money could not buy even a single root of it.

Millet has not originated as many new varieties as M. Denis but at least one of his later introductions, COLONEL CANDELOT, has received a great deal of notice and like MADAME GAUDICHAU, it has become quite scarce. It is a very early variety and one of the best "reds", if we may be allowed in Iris parlance to use the word "red". To my American readers I wish to bring the message that "The Repertoire de Couleurs", the famous French Standard of Colors, which has been reported "out of print" for several years, is now very easily obtained in Paris at the low price of fifty francs, and by using it with our blooms we can at once make up our minds whether we are justified

in using the words "red" and "pink" when describing the colors in our Irises.

ROMEO is one of Millet's most attractive varieties having yellow standards and rich red-purple falls; LEPINOUX was shown this year for the first time, and I believe I am telling the truth when I say it was five feet tall; IVANHOE, IGOUF, CORA, CORIDA, DELICATISSIMA, MLE. YVONNE PELIETIER have been growing satisfactorily in my garden for two or three years, and I had been looking forward with pleasure to seeing them in full bloom this year, but I not only missed seeing them in my own garden, but I also missed them in M. Millet's garden. I hope to be able to give you a report on them next year, and also on the following new varieties which I purchased of Millet this year: MR. D. PERTHUIS, SUZON, GENERAL GALLIENI and SIMONNE VAISSIERE.

Millet has given us not only fine Irises, but he has given us also fine Peonies, and in the selection of their names he has shown his loyalty to his family. I know of no more appropriate way in which he could show his regard for the members of his father's household than by bestowing their names upon his choicest seedlings, and this is exactly what he has done.

He has again selected his sister's name, Madame Gaudichau, for his very best Peony, and it is not only his best, but it is also one of the world's best, if I was able to judge its quality correctly from the bloom I saw on a two year old plant. I am glad I have a three year old plant of this variety in my garden, but of course I did not see its bloom this year. I will anticipate seeing wonderful blooms on my four year old plant next year. Its color is a rich, lustrous dark red and I have heard some Peony Enthusiasts place it in a class with Philippe Rivoire (Riviere), the celebrated French variety which is so much admired and which is so hard to obtain. I am hoping that my four year old plant of Madame Gaudichau will next year give me bloom of equal quality and beauty with Philippe Rivoire.

Pink and cream are the colors of youth and beauty, and so Millet has selected the names of Jeanne Gaudichau and Margaret Gaudichau for two semi-dwarf growing varieties whose predominating colors are pink and cream. Both of these varieties, as well as Madame Gaudichau, are still so scarce that they have seldom been exhibited at any of our Peony Shows, but no doubt they will become more plentiful in the next few years.

Millet has, during the last two years, furnished me with twenty new varieties of Japanese Peonies, but he tells me that his very best Japanese variety is still in the garden, and that when he sends it out into the world, it will be under the name of his wife, Madame Millet.

While I was in Paris, Madame Millet was very sick and it was necessary to take her to a hospital, but later each time I met Mr. Millet I could see happiness in his face and hear joy in his voice as he told me she was improving.

M. Millet's garden is located in Bourg la Reine, less than ten miles from Paris, and as he speaks English fluently, a visit to his garden is doubly interesting. He tells me that not until the French franc attains its pre-war value can he consider a trip to America, but when he does come to see our American gardens, I know he will not only receive a warm welcome, but he will take home with him the friendship of every American Peony and Iris grower.

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Van Wert, Ohio, U. S. A.
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